Chapter 2

An Overview of English Phrasal Verbs

2.1 English Phrasal Verbs

As we have seen in the previous chapter, the phrasal verbs in English are complex linguistic expressions which are not easily amenable to straightforward definition and classification. This chapter outlines some of the existing works on EPVs including their corpus-based study, also as a theoretical background of the present study. There exist divergent views among scholars and researchers even about the inclusion or exclusion of certain expressions as phrasal verbs (e.g. phrasal verbs *look out* versus prepositional verbs *look at*). Phrasal verb dictionaries feature large number of prepositional verbs (Liu, 2011), a potential source of confusion for both learners and researchers. One standard and often cited definition of phrasal, largely based on Quirk et al. (1985), is given by Darwin and Gray (1999: 76-77) as "a phrasal verb consists of a verb proper and a morphologically invariable particle that functions together as a single unit both lexically and syntactically." Therefore, the phrasal verb should be defined in two parts. The first is syntactic: a phrasal verb is a verb (referred to by Bolinger (1971) as the verb proper) followed by a particle which is morphologically invariable and functions with the verb as a single grammatical unit. The phrasal verb thus functions as a unified element within the verb phrase. This broadly distinguishes phrasal verbs from prepositional verbs. In prepositional verbs, the main verb and the preposition operate independently. In the sentence, *she looked at her bag*, the prepositional verb "look at" demonstrates that the

particle *at* functions as a preposition within the prepositional phrase *at her bag*. The lack of grammatical unity between the verb and the particle signifies that *look at* is not a phrasal verb. Certain phrasal verbs require specific prepositions after the particle (e.g. *come up with, take out of*): these are typically referred to as phrasal-prepositional verbs. The second part of the definition is lexical: phrasal verbs function as single lexical units. This characteristic is evidenced by the fact that many phrasal verbs can be replaced by a single-word equivalent, and that the meaning of a phrasal verb is not only different from the meaning of the verb proper in isolation (e.g. check in ≠ check) (although this is debatable in the case of redundant particles such as *off* in *finish off*), but also different from the meaning of the verb proper combined with a different particle (e.g. *check in ≠ check out*) (Thim, 2012; Schmitt & Redwood, 2011).

There is a difference in degree to which phrasal verb constituents give up their individual inherent meanings towards a full idiosyncratic meaning. In this regard, Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999) delineate three semantic categories of phrasal verbs: literal, aspectual, and idiomatic. Literal phrasal verbs are those whose constituents appear to retain much of their individual meanings (e.g. *fall* and *down* in *the picture fell down from the wall*). Aspectual phrasal verbs occupy an intermediate position, as their meanings are more transparent than those of idiomatic phrasal verbs yet less transparent than those of literal phrasal verbs. The verb can often be interpreted literally, whereas the particle imparts meanings about the verb's aspect. For instance, in the sentence *finish up your drink* the verb *finish* is used in its literal sense and the particle *up* emphasises the notion of completion. Idiomatic phrasal verbs have constituents that appear to have lost their usual meanings, for instance, *give* and *in* in the sentence *I didn't want to but I eventually gave in*. Darwin and Gray (1999) and Biber et al. (1999), among others, classify literal verb + particle combinations (e.g. come down, throw out, go in) as free

combinations rather than phrasal verbs, as their meanings can be inferred from those of the individual components. In accordance with Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999), as well as Gardner and Davies (2007) and Liu (2011), these are treated as phrasal verbs with a literal meaning. The resemblance to their figurative counterparts accounts for this, as Liu (2011: 664) observes: "the application of the semantic criterion is not always straightforward and often involves some subjective judgments." Furthermore, Sawyer (2000) argues that considering such combinations as phrasal verbs may benefit students' comprehension of their surface structure, thereby reducing their avoidance.

Darwin and Gray (1999) highlight that phrasal verbs share most of the characteristics of single-word verbs. For instance, phrasal verbs can be classified grammatically as transitive (e.g. *I carried out an experiment*), intransitive (e.g. *She wants to break up*) and ergative (e.g. *the house burned down /he burned the house down*). Most transitive phrasal verbs form passives (e.g. *an experiment was carried out*) and action nominals (e.g. *the carrying out of experiments*). As noted by Biber et al. (1999), almost all transitive phrasal verbs allow for particle movement (e.g. *I need to get my keys back*) whereas prepositional verbs never do (e.g. **she looked her bag at*). The separation of the verb and the particle represents the standard word order when the direct object is a pronoun (e.g. *please turn it on* ≠ **please turn on it*). Certain transitive phrasal verbs, however, are inseparable (e.g. *they came across a problem ≠ they came a problem across*; Darwin & Gray, 1999: 72). In certain instances, particle movement can alter the meaning, as illustrated by the following example (Darwin & Gray, 1999: 72-73): *I don't want to take on Jill* ('hire') ≠ *I don't want to take Jill on* ('challenge').

From phonological perspective, phrasal verbs and single-word verbs appear analogous: comparable to verbs where the final syllable is often stressed, the final syllable

in phrasal verbs (i.e. the particle) is primarily emphasised (Celce-Murcia et al., 1996). In contrast, prepositions remain unstressed. A notable distinction between single-word verbs and phrasal verbs is that phrasal verbs consist of more than one component and that components can be separable in the case of transitive and ergative structures; e.g. *take off your shoes*/*take your shoes off.* The variability in particle positioning may cause significant challenges and complexities for learners.

A prevalent belief exists that phrasal verbs can be replaced by single-word verb synonyms. Although this applies to numerous phrasal verbs (e.g. put off/postpone), certain phrasal verbs might introduce nuances or implications that significantly alter their meaning compared to their single-word synonyms. Cornell (1985) provided examples, such as *come by* which implies difficulty or potential dishonesty (e.g. *I wonder how he came by that money*), *tell off* which has a rather childish connotation and is rarely employed in serious contexts (e.g. *the officer told the soldiers off for neglecting their duties*). Consequently, phrasal verbs possess highly specific meanings. Pye (1996) observed that contrary to the prevailing notion that informality characterises phrasal verbs, they frequently represent the most standard means of expression. He provided examples such as *break in* (e.g. *it looked like someone had broken in*), *put away* (e.g. *put your toys away*), and *fill up* (e.g. *fill it up with water*) as phrasal verbs that are "in no way marked in terms of formality" (p. 699). Instead of perceiving phrasal verbs as informal substitutes for single-word verbs, it might be more accurate to regard single-word verbs as formal substitutes for phrasal verbs. Pye provides further instances, such as using *rise* instead of *get up,* or *extract* instead of *pull out*. Pye (1996) asserts that many single-word counterparts do not serve as true synonyms for phrasal verbs since they are "also inextricably linked to and restricted by their collocational environment or syntactic behaviour" (p. 700). For instance, the terms *circulate*/*put about* exhibit distinct behaviour

in corpora: the verb *circulate* can be used intransitively often with the subjects *rumours, facts,* or *information*, whereas the phrasal verb *put about* as a transitive verb typically used with the object *it* (e.g. *someone's been putting it about that she's planning to leave)*.

Encompassing a wide range of linguistic complexities, phrasal verbs have long been a prominent and captivating aspect of the English language, drawing the keen interest and scholarly investigation of linguists, language learners, translators, etc. They represent fundamental components of the English lexicon and are complex verb structures composed of a main verb and a particle (typically a preposition or adverb) that together present a unique meaning, often distinct from the individual meaning of components (Martinez & Schmitt, 2012; White, 2012). They comprise a verb and a morphologically invariable particle, such as *come up, turn out,* etc. They behave as a single lexical unit where some are fairly transparent in meaning (e.g. *stand up*), and others are non-compositional (e.g. *make out*). Their classification as a single semantic unit is demonstrated by their replaceability with single-word verb counterparts, such as *put off* by *postpone* and *turn up* by *arrive*. They are highly polysemous in nature; for example, the phrasal verb *bring up* will acquire radically different meanings depending on the context in which it is used *(bring up the tools from the basement* means 'carry them up'; *bring up children* means 'nurture'; *bring up a suggestion* means 'mention') (Biber et al., 1999). These versatile constructions present a significant challenge for second language learners, who may view them as arbitrary combinations whose structure and meaning are difficult to master. However, research suggests that a more contextualised approach to phrasal verbs can enhance students' comprehension and ability to interpret their meanings. Scholars traces the origins of these verb-particle combinations to the earliest Old English written records where prepositions and adverbs were primarily used to denote direction, location, or spatial orientation (Zhambylkyzy et al., 2018). Over time, a substantive

amount of these literal, spatial associations have evolved, with the verb - particle constructions to denote idiomatic expressions whose meanings cannot be directly inferred from the meaning of the individual constituents. The prevalence of phrasal verbs is not only linguistically significant but are also profoundly integrated in colloquial and idiomatic English. Mastering their intricacies is not merely an academic pursuit, but an essential element for attaining fluency and command over English language expressions. Phrasal verbs have long been regarded as one of the most challenging aspects of the English language for learners. English phrasal verbs (EPVs) comprise a verb followed by a morphologically invariant particle. For instance, *take out, pick up, put on, turn off,* etc. Their meaning is not strictly inferred from the individual meaning of the constituent elements. They often exhibit meanings that are not actually the summation of verb and particle. The second element, termed a particle, modifies the meaning of the verb; it may impart a directional or aspectual meaning to the verb, or it may completely change the meaning of the verb. Many phrasal verbs have a single-word equivalent of Romance origin or Latinate words, which differs from them in style, collocation, and meaning. For instance, put out ~ extinguish, take out- remove, blow up~ explode, etc. They are employed across diverse genres and registers ranging from highly formal text to colloquial speech.

In the area of learning-teaching, EPVs have been very extensively studied because of their complexities for the learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) or/and English as a Second Language (ESL). EPVs are both syntactically and semantically complex. Several researchers have studied the challenges in their acquisition/learning as well as in teaching (Alejo-González, 2010; Condon, 2008; Dagut & Laufer, 1985; Deshors, 2016; Garnier & Schmitt, 2016; Gilquin, 2015; Hampe, 2012; Hulstijn & Marchena, 1989; Laufer & Eliasson, 1993; Liao & Fukuya, 2004; Nassaji & Tian, 2010;

Strong, 2013). Scholars and researchrs have also studied EPVs focussing on their description including the frequency of occurrence and their usage patterns (Biber et al., 1999; Darwin & Gray, 1999; Gardner & Davies, 2007; Liu, 2011; Garnier & Schmitt, 2015).

2.2 Phrasal Verb Semantics

English phrasal verbs have often been semantically classified in terms of their compositionality (i.e., whether all constituents of a PV, the verb and the particle, contribute their primary meanings to the overall semantic content of the PVs). The classes fall somewhere between fully compositional PVs, e.g., fly up, and fully idiomatic PVs, e.g., give up. For example, see Jackendoff (2002), Dehé (2002), O'Dowd (1998), Chen (1986), and Fraser (1976). They have been semantically characterized as 'literal', 'aspectual' and 'non-compositional' (or 'idiomatic) by Jackendoff (2002), Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman (1999), Quirk et al. (1985), Makkai (1972), Fraser (1965), Live (1965) and among others.

2.2.1 Literal Phrasal Verbs

In this type of construction, the verb combines with a directional particle, and the resultant construction is semantically transparent from the meaning of its constituents. The combination of verb and particle allows an interpretation of motion through space, with the particle expressing the direction and the verb expressing the kind of verbal action. This denotes fully compositional semantics in which the particle has a directional meaning, termed literal phrasal verbs or directional verb particle constructions (VPCs). In this categorization, the verb and particle retain their literal meaning. Literal phrasal verbs are fully compositional combinations as their meaning can be deduced from the

individual semantics of the parts and, therefore, not stored in the lexicon (Jackendoff, 2002). For instance, the example (1) below illustrates the same.

(1) *I opened my briefcase and took out a notepad*. "to remove"

In this example, the central/basic meaning of *take* combines with the spatial directional meaning of *out*. The verb *take* indicates that the speaker is transferring the notepad from one place to another, and *out* indicates the outward direction of that transfer. Therefore, it can be learned by combining the meanings of individual parts (verb and particle). In compositional constructions, the combination of verb and particle allows an interpretation of motion through space, with the particle expressing the direction and the verb expressing the kind of verbal action.

2.2.2 Aspectual Phrasal Verbs

Aspectual phrasal verbs are defined as the class where "particles contribute consistent aspectual meaning" (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999). Aspectual particles can have inceptive (particles *off, out, up,* e.g. *start up*), continuative (particles *on, along, away, around, through*, e.g. play along), iterative (particle *over*, e.g. write over), or completive (particles *up, out, off, down, over*, e.g. cut off) meaning. The verb retains its literal meaning in this categorisation, and the particle may only contribute to the additional aspectual meaning. Grammatically, aspect refers to the nature of a verb as completed or ongoing. Here, the particle functions as an aspectual modifier that is omissible and often redundant, e.g. She ate (up) the food. Particle omission is the single syntactic criterion identifying aspectual phrasal verbs (Jackendoff, 2002).

The particles in these constructions are not directional but aspectual, and they typically mark telic Aktionsart, as shown by Brinton (1985), cf., e.g. (2) and (3):

(2) *He used our supplies.*

(3) *He used our supplies up*.

The particle introduces “the concept of a goal or an endpoint to durative situations which otherwise have no necessary terminus” (Brinton, 1985, p. 160).

(4) *Don't use up all the milk - we need some for breakfast.*

Here, *up* relates to using milk to its entirety, which has been used to the point of completion. Aspectual constructions might be treated as a sub-group of compositional constructions since their meaning is usually fully transparent and readily understandable. The aspectual constructions show that the particles are used in a semantically transparent way, which may overlap considerably with the ‘literal’, i.e. directional, use of the particles. Particles contribute aspectual information to the PVs. On the other hand, Verbs contribute most of the lexical-semantic content in such PVs. For example, in (5) (Baldwin et al., 2003).

(5) *Susan finished up her paper*.

The verb *finish* contributes to its regular lexical content. However, the particle *up*, instead of contributing its regular lexical-semantic content, adds aspectual information that the action was completed (i.e., the COMPLETELY sense). The aspectual nature of particles is seen by several as a defining criterion of the phrasal verbs (Live, 1965, p. 441; Bolinger, 1971, pp. 85, 96-97; Fraser, 1976, p. 6). Particle *up* is most frequently associated with aspectual meaning. (Thim, 2012). As ‘aspectual’ markers, the particles have lost much of their original concrete, directional meaning.

2.2.3 Idiomatic Phrasal Verbs

Idiomatic phrasal verbs are also termed non-compositional constructions, where both the constituents of English phrasal verbs give up their basic or primary meaning and attain a new meaning apart from their compositionality. The idiomatic constructions differ from the two preceding groups in that their meaning cannot be inferred from the meaning of their elements; they belong quite unambiguously to the lexicon. Idiomatic phrasal verbs

are non-compositional and stored in the lexicon as whole combinations (Jackendoff, 2002). For instance, the PV ‘pick up’ in (6).

(6) *When you live in a country, you soon pick up the language.*

Here, the sense of *pick up* is ‘to learn’. It does not appear to connect to the meaning of *pick* or *up*.

2.3 Phrasal Verb Particles

The term particle denotes the second component of the phrasal verb, which can be either an adverb or a preposition. Jowett (1964, p. 53) states that the function of the particle is of great value to this construction because the particle is used to change the meaning of the verb, and sometimes, it adds another meaning to the verb. Therefore, these particles have the function of forming new verbs; the meaning of the lexical verbs ‘make’ or ‘take’ is different from the meaning of the phrasalized verbs ‘make up’ and ‘take off’. Jowett lists five functions of the EPV particles:

i. The particles make the phrasalized verbs have new meanings which differ from the meaning of the original lexical verbs, as in the lexical verb ‘carry’ when combined with the particle ‘on’ to give the meaning of ‘continuity’.
ii. Some particles do not change the meaning of the lexical verb, yet, they add new meaning to the lexical verbs when they are combined with them to form the phrasal verbs as in ‘speak’ and ‘speak out’. The particle here adds the meaning of ‘loudly’ to the original verb.
iii. Some particles add sense of completion to the meaning lexical verb as in ‘carry out’ and ‘gather up’.

iv. Some particles help to form collocations. These particles function as adverbs. The collocation consists of both the verb and the particle (adverb). The particle retains the meaning of both elements as in ‘go out’.

v. Some other particles function as prepositions but they are more attached to the verb. These prepositions differ from the pure prepositions in that the complement which follows them can be omitted and easily understood from the context, as in: -*She left the baby upstairs and went down. (stairs).*

2.4 Approaches to Phrasal Verb Semantics

2.4.1 Traditional Approach

There have been a good number of works on the semantic aspects of the EPV within the traditional approaches (Kennedy, 1920; Live, 1965; Bolinger, 1971; Lipka, 1972; Fraser, 1976). Phrasal verbs represent arbitrary and unpredictable linguistic units complex to outline compositionality (e.g. Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman, 1999). However, traditional approaches have not been very successful to provide a systematic, consistent account for the semantic behaviour of phrasal verbs. Kovacs (2011) points out that grammarians, such as Bolinger, Lipka, and Fraser, among others, usually discussed phrasal verbs from the perspective of their syntactic structure and paid attention to the spatial and aspectual meaning of these combinations. The traditional approach to phrasal verb semantics has often been characterized by a focus on syntactic structure rather than the semantic intricacies of these linguistic units. One of the key challenges in understanding phrasal verbs through a traditional lens is the inherent complexity and variability of their meanings. For instance, the same verb can take on vastly different meanings depending on the particle used, leading to confusion and avoidance among language learners (Liao & Fukuya, 2004; Yablonska, 2023). This semantic ambiguity is

compounded by the fact that many learners, particularly those from non-English backgrounds, tend to favor single verbs over phrasal verbs due to the perceived difficulty in mastering their usage (Tu & Thao, 2019). The traditional view has also been criticized for not adequately addressing the cognitive aspects of language acquisition. Cognitive linguistics posits that understanding the semantics of phrasal verbs involves recognizing the conceptual metaphors and image schemas that underlie their meanings (Tsaroucha, 2020). Traditional approaches often overlook these cognitive dimensions, leading to a superficial understanding of phrasal verbs as mere lexical items devoid of deeper semantic connections (Yasuda, 2010; Mahpeykar & Tyler, 2015).

2.4.2 Cognitive Approach

The recent advancements in Cognitive Linguistics (CL) have gradually begun to present evidence for the systematicity of these structures, particularly by analysing the role of prepositions and particles in the polysemy (Lindner, 1981; Lakoff, 1987; Brugman & Lakoff, 1988; Rudzka-Ostyn, 2003; Tyler & Evans, 2003). Cognitive linguistics (CL) approaches to phrasal verb semantics provide the semantic aspects of English phrasal verbs. Among others, it was Lindner (1981) who first looked at PV from a Cognitive Linguistics (CL) perspective, applying Langacker's space grammar in her analysis. Together with her followers (Morgan, 1997; Rudzka-Ostyn, 2003; Perdek, 2010; Olson, 2013; Mahpeykar, 2014; Mahpeykar & Tyler, 2015)), it has been evidenced that PV have their non-arbitrary, compositional nature organised in a relatively systematic manner. Together with the lexical verb, the English particle is one of the components included in the semantic makeup of phrasal verbs. The multiple meanings of phrasal verbs represent a well-known challenge in English, as linguists have usually considered them as arbitrary and unpredictable (Lipka, 1972; Fraser, 1976). Cognitive linguistics (CL) proposal to phrasal verbs can enhance their comprehension, retention as well as knowledge

transference from learnt to novel phrasal verbs (Kovecses & Szabco, 1996; Boers, 2000; Kurtyka, 2001; Condon, 2008). Cognitive grammarians suggested that the arbitrariness of phrasal verbs seems to be given by particles as the meanings of verbs are less debatable. They showed that the meanings of particles form a network of connected senses where one or more meanings are prototypical (central) while the rest are less prototypical (peripheral) (cf. Lindner, 1981; Lakoff, 1987; Rudzka-Ostyn, 2003; Tyler & Evans, 2003). While the central meaning of a particle denotes spatial locations or movements, the peripheral senses, usually abstract, are extended from the concrete, spatial meaning.

Lindner (1981) first presented a cognitive semantics account of English phrasal verb particles *up* and *out* using Langacker's (1980) space grammar. The study gives an account of the relationship between the trajector (TR) and the landmark (LM) in her analysis of PV. She focuses on the structure of the verb and particle, including *up* and *out*, and those phrasal verbs that present concrete and abstract meanings organized in a fixed manner. The compositional elements have a separate and unified network of related senses. The particle primarily determines the main source of the meaning of phrasal verb structure. The study, therefore, focuses on how the central meaning of each particle gives rise to the rest of its extended senses. Several studies (Boers, 2011; Condon, 2008; Condon & Kelly, 2002; Kovecses & Szabco, 1996; Kurtyka, 2001) have shown that a cognitive approach to phrasal verb semantics can enhance their comprehension and retention as well as knowledge transference from learnt to novel phrasal verbs. Tyler and Evans (2003) present a cognitive linguistic-based approach to analyse the lexical polysemy in conjugation with Langacker's (1987) cognitive grammar that involves the Trajector-Landmark relation to conceptualize the spatial concepts between the entities. The explanation provides the compositionality of the particle elements in English phrasal verb constructions. Applying the CL perspective, Luo (2019) argues that the directional,

resultative, and aspectual phrasal verbs are analysable in the sense that the components (verb and particle), respectively, contribute to the meaning of phrasal verbs as a whole. The CL-based approach to phrasal verbs underscores that the multiple meanings of phrasal verbs can range from a more concrete reference to a more abstract one (Kovacs, 2011).

2.5 Phrasal Verbs in ESL/EFL Study

Phrasal verbs have always been the object of close attention of researchers. Phrasal verbs are a common feature of the English language and learners encounter them at a very early stage. *Get up, take off, get on,* etc. would undoubtedly appear in the vocabulary list of any beginner's course book. Despite the notoriously challenging aspects of the English phrasal verbs, these combinations are of high relevance for ESL/EFL learners as knowledge of them is often equated with language fluency and proficiency. The complex syntactic and semantic patterns of these expressions turn out to be a major pedagogical concern among ESL/EFL learners. The English phrasal verb combinations are claimed to be one of the most notoriously challenging aspect of English language instruction (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999; Granger, 1996; Siyanova & Schmitt, 2007). Language learners have been reported to experience difficulties in dealing with these forms in such areas as "'remembering meaning', 'grammar' and 'word order'" (Pye, 1996, p. 698). The problems can be attributed to a number of characteristics of these fuzzy constructions, such as their orthographic forms, grammatical configurations, and idiomatic nature. Despite their rather complicated structures and unpredictable meanings of some combinations, phrasal verbs are of high relevance for ESL/EFL learners because a grasp of them "can be a great asset to learners in acquiring a new language" (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999). Phrasal verbs can thus assess learners' level of English language proficiency, as evidenced by tests such as the TOEFL. Cowie (1993, p. 38) views them as

“a nettle that has to be grasped if students are to achieve native-like proficiency in speech and writing”. Cullen and Sargeant (1996, p. vii) explain that “understanding and being able to use these constructions correctly in spoken and written English is essential if the learner is to develop a complete command of the language”.

2.6 English Phrasal Verbs in Corpus-Based Study

Corpus-based study has emerged a one of the best suited approaches to examine various linguistic phenomena as well as their applicational aspects. The statistical account of phrasal verbs in corpus-based studies that identifies the phrasal verb combinations in the corpus and further reports their frequency of occurrences by providing a comprehensive list of the most frequent phrasal verbs turns out to be a foundation for the researchers. Several studies have attempted to identify and classify phrasal verbs following corpus approach, culminating in significant works such as the Longman Dictionary of Phrasal Verbs (Courtney, 1983), the Collins COBUILD Dictionary of Phrasal Verbs (Sinclair & Moon, 1989), NTC’s Dictionary of Phrasal Verbs and Other Idiomatic Verbal Phrases (Spears, 1993) and the Cambridge International Dictionary of Phrasal Verbs (Walter & Pye, 1997). These dictionaries identified a large number of English phrasal verbs, and provided descriptions of their meanings along with contextualised examples of their use. Despite their utility, a significant limitation of extensive representation is their lack of detailed frequency statistics, which could be potentially beneficial for pedagogical and assessment purposes (Gardner & Davies, 2007). In addition to dictionaries, a number of corpus studies have aimed to examine the frequency patterns of phrasal verb usage in greater detail. While analysing the phrasal verbs in English priority is given to the phrasal verbs both in terms of their frequency in the corpus as well as their most frequent meanings.

Estimates of the total number of phrasal verbs in English vary. According to McCarthy and O'Dell (2004), there are beyond 5,000 phrasal verbs together with their noun and adjective forms presently employed in English. Gardner and Davies (2007) find that the British National Corpus (BNC) incorporates 12,508 phrasal verb lemmas. Both results are significant, clearly demonstrating the necessity for establishing frequency lists of phrasal verbs to assist educators in making informed selections. Cornell (1985) highlighted the absence of deliberate selection of phrasal verbs for instruction "their discovery may be uncomfortably similar, from the learner's point of view, to the opening of Pandora's box" (p. 277); subsequently, the importance for selection and gradation before teaching, "even at the risk of controversial inclusions and omissions." Prior to the establishment of a phrasal verb frequency list, educators relied predominantly on their intuition for determining the limited number of phrasal verbs discussed in the classroom. Darwin and Grey (1999: 67) assert that educators' intuitions regarding frequency and utility may be inappropriate and "though having the best intentions, [teachers] may be presenting the student with a list of terribly difficult phrasal verbs that have very little use in the world outside the classroom." A corpus-based frequency study of English phrasal verbs was conducted by Biber et al. (1999), Gardner and Davies (2007) and Liu (2011). Nevertheless, owing to the frequent amounts of phrasal verbs they considered, it is likely to be discussed in the present context. I will concentrate on three recent and significant corpus-based frequency studies of English phrasal verbs.

2.6.1 Biber et al. (1999)

The Longman Grammar by Biber et al. (1999) turned out as first significant advancement in this regard. Biber et al. (1999) includes all phrasal verbs with a frequency exceeding 40 occurrences per million words in at least one register of the Longman Spoken and Written English (LSWE) corpus, thereby highlighting the frequency counts of phrasal verbs and

their respective components. A list of 31 most frequent phrasal verbs was developed, encompassing examples such as *stand up, sit down, come on*, and *go off*. The study identified five lexical verbs as the most productive in combining with adverbial particles for the formulation of phrasal verbs: *come* and *put* (each combining with 12 distinct particles), *get* (combining with 11 distinct particles), *go* (combining with 10 distinct particles), and *take* (combining with 9 distinct particles). Similarly, six adverbial particles were identified as being the most frequent, namely *up*, *down*, *in*, *out*, *on*, and *off*. Further, phrasal verbs were categorised according to their semantic domains, including communication (e.g. *point out*), occurrence (e.g. *come off*), aspectual (e.g. *go on*), copular (e.g. *turn out*), mental (e.g. *find out*), and activity (e.g. *get up*), the latter representing 75 % of phrasal verb occurrences in the conversation and fiction registers of the LSWE corpus. The relative frequencies of the 31 most frequent phrasal verbs across four register types (conversation, fiction, news reportage, and academic prose) were determined. Biber et al. estimated that phrasal verbs occur almost 2,000 times per million words in fiction and conversation. Considering that literal phrasal verbs were excluded from their selected definition (classified as free combinations instead), One may conjecture that this figure should indeed be far greater. In this regard, Liu (2011) affirms that his broader phrasal verb definition, including the literal combinations adopted in his study, resulted in three times higher frequency rates in the two registers. As an advancement of Biber et al. (1999) work, Gardner and Davies (2007) performed an exploratory corpus-based study of phrasal verbs in the British National Corpus (BNC), and Liu (2011) conducted multi-corpus research aiming to offer a comparative examination of the most frequently used phrasal verbs between American and British English.

2.6.2 Gardner and Davies (2007)

Gardner and Davies (2007) performed corpus-based research on English phrasal verbs employing the 100-million-word British National Corpus (BNC) to identify the most frequent lexical verbs as well as adverbial particles in phrasal verbs combinations, examine the interaction between the lexical verbs and various adverbial particles, compile a list of the most frequent phrasal verbs based on overall frequency and coverage, and estimate their respective number of word senses associated with each of the most frequent phrasal verbs. The findings of this study elucidate the eight most frequent adverbial particles (i.e., *out, up, on, back, down, in, off,* and *over*) and 20 most frequent lexical verbs (*go, come, take, get, set, carry, turn, bring, look, put, pick, make, point, sit, find, give, work break, hold,* and *move*). The combination of these lexical verbs and adverbial particles accounted for 53.7 percent of the total number of phrasal verbs in BNC. Further, the study identified the top 100 phrasal verb lemmas in the BNC (such as go on, carry out, set up, pick up, go back, etc.), that constitute approximately half of all the phrasal verbs in BNC, and have roughly 559 distinct meanings, or on average 5.6 meanings per phrasal verb. The study concluded that these corpus-based findings can be utilised in pedagogy and future research to enhance the instruction of phrasal verbs in English. However, as highlighted by Liu (2011) and the authors themselves, the final 'list' has several shortcomings, among which the fact that it contains only PVs composed of the top 20 lexical verbs lemmas functioning in phrasal verb combinations, thereby potentially discarding other frequently encountered phrasal verbs, and the possibility that these phrasal verbs may not be as prevalent in varieties of English other than British English, considering that the British National Corpus was the only source utilised.

2.6.3 Liu (2011)

Liu analysed all the phrasal verbs present in the lists by Biber et al. (1999) and Gardner and Davies (2007). He encountered a significant overlap between the two, with merely four of Biber et al.'s 31 phrasal verbs excluded from Gardner and Davies' collection of the top 100 phrasal verbs. Alongside examining the 104 combinations of phrasal verbs in the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), he also queried the COCA and the BNC for other frequent phrasal verbs, using four relevant comprehensive phrasal verb dictionaries as a reference. The comprehensive search yielded 8,847 phrasal verbs, comprising 5,933 sourced from dictionaries and 2,914 derived as a by-product of his query methodology. The criterion for inclusion in his frequency list was set at 10 tokens per million words for three specific reasons. Initially, 70% of the 104 phrasal verbs in the combined list of Biber et al. and Gardner and Davies possess a minimum of 10 tokens per million words. Secondly, lower frequency threshold would have resulted in the incorporation of significantly more phrasal verbs. Nonetheless, as warned by Liu (2011: 667), a compilation of the most commonly utilised phrasal verbs should not be excessively extensive to retain its “natural significance.” Thirdly, the authors reported that the top 100 phrasal verbs identified by Gardner and Davies accounted for over fifty percent of all phrasal verb occurrences in the BNC. Liu's list is anticipated to offer more than adequate coverage of phrasal verb occurrences in corpora employing the same frequency threshold. Of the 8,847 phrasal verbs examined, only 152 were included in the final compilation procedure: the combined list of Biber et al. and Gardner and Davies, along with an additional 48 phrasal verbs. Liu observes that although the 152 most frequently encountered phrasal verbs constitute merely 1.2% of the total 12,508 phrasal verb lemmas in the BNC, they account for 63% of the total 512,305 phrasal verb occurrences, which "illustrates the representativeness and thus the utility of these most

commonly employed phrasal verbs" (p. 668). He also observes that the most prevalent phrasal verbs exhibit considerable similarity between American and British English. Due to his synthesis of "look around" with "look round" and "turn around" with "turn round," resulting from variations in usage, the total count of phrasal verbs in Liu's list is 150, not 152. The researcher subsequently provided its implications for English learners, educators, and potential researchers. English learners and educators may utilise this list of the 150 most frequent phrasal verbs for their educational and instructional objectives. Future research may investigate the varied interpretations of phrasal verbs across different registers.

The phrasal verbs examined in this study are those listed in Liu's (2011) presentation of the 150 most frequent phrasal verbs in American and British English, which remains the most recent corpus analysis of phrasal verb frequency. The list includes all items previously recognised by Biber et al. (1999) and Gardner and Davies (2007), along with an additional 48 items identified by Liu from the COCA applying statistical methods involving chi-square and dispersion tests. Liu presents it as "a comprehensive list of the most common PVs in American and British English, one that complements those offered by the two previous studies with more necessary items and more detailed usage information" (p. 661). The list benefits from incorporating items discovered and extracted by three distinct research utilising various methodologies and corpora, so enhancing our confidence that the items on the final list are the most frequent phrasal verbs in English. Liu studied two distinct corpora (BNC and COCA) encompassing a diverse range of genres and registers, hence rendering the list beneficial for both British and American English learners. One could contend that, given the substantial quantity of phrasal verbs in English, the inclusion of merely 150 phrasal verbs is insufficient and additional items should be incorporated. We choose to restrict our

educational list to 150 items for two reasons. The initial observation is that the 150 most prevalent PVs account for 62.95% of the total 512,305 PV occurrences in the BNC. This indicates that initially focussing just on these PVs is exceptionally effective and advantageous. Liu examined a total of 8,847 PVs while compiling his list; this is a considerable quantity. Of these, only the ultimate 150 exhibited a minimum of 10 tokens per million words in either the COCA or the BNC, indicating that the remaining PVs are likely too rarely encountered to warrant inclusion on the list.

The 150 most frequent phrasal verbs in the English language (Liu, 2011) have been used as a reference in many studies to investigate their major meanings represented in the corpus. Garnier and Schmitt (2015) developed a list of most frequent meanings expressed by the 150 most common phrasal verbs. There is a long debate on the total number of phrasal verbs in English. Some of the dictionaries of phrasal verbs have made contributions towards the listing of phrasal verbs but a lot more are there and new ones are also being coined for the enrichment of language. There are several works reported on finding the frequent number of phrasal verb occurrences in various corpora of the English language and also among their various registers. Several attempts have been made on identifying phrasal verbs that merits prioritization in learning. Liu (2011) provided a comprehensive list of the 150 most frequent phrasal verbs in the English language with the examination of the occurrences of phrase verbs in three major corpora of two major varieties of the English language. She investigated these phrasal verbs in the COCA, BNC and Longman spoken and written English corpus.

This chapter has brief presented an overview of the English phrasal verbs, outlining their syntactic and semantic categorisation and also their complexities and challenges. This classification highlights the complex nature of phrasal verbs, from compositional combinations of verbs and particles to extremely idiomatic combinations

where meaning cannot be inferred from the individual meanings of constituent elements. The syntactic and semantic categories provide a foundation for the systematic analysis of phrasal verbs, emphasising the relationship between form and meaning. The brief outlines of the different research studies provide a variety of opinions concerning the categorisation and understanding of phrasal verbs. The contrasting perspectives of traditional and cognitive linguists highlight the dynamic and developing comprehension of phrasal verbs in linguistic research. This chapter has also examined some of the significant corpus-based research on EPVs focusing on the identification of the frequency of occurrences of phrasal verbs in the major English corpora. These studies offer significant insights into the most often encountered phrasal verbs, their usage, and the variations in frequency across different registers and dialects. This chapter highlights the significance of phrasal verbs as a linguistic phenomenon that enhances the expressive capacity of English while also presenting considerable hurdles for analysis and acquisition. The observations and insights obtained from this overview (along with those obtained from a brief survey of literature reported in the next chapter 3) provide a foundation and theoretical motivation for the present study.